

Male Migration and Emerging Female Headed Families: Issues and Challenges

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Abstract

The rapid economic and social changes that swept through the last few decades had altered the family system. Incidences of migration have increased many folds. What is interesting is that in the situation of migration, the patriarchal family in a short time period becomes a matrilocal family. The woman-head decides the day-to-day matters and sometimes crucial matters. The empowerment of women is a new phenomenon which requires an exploration. The major thrust of the proposed inquiry is to make an intensive and depth study of the female headed household at city level. What is important is to see how women perform this new responsibility. The study of family will analyze the nature and extent of transformation among women headed households. It will be able to penetrate to what extent the functions, role, authority and status of women undergo change in the new phenomenon of absentee head of the family.

An exploratory study was designed to generate data from the selected respondents. The instrument used for data collection was a structured scheduled interview seeking information concerning the socio-economic background of female headed families, decision to migrate, daily life in a migrant household, intra and inter-household relationship, changes in gender roles and power relations within the household, management and investment of remittances, impact of migration on the wives participation in the labour market are included. The women, who are part of the female headed household got confidence and tended to get more decision-making powers and of course not passing through the economic crisis.

Key words

India, family, women headed families, migration

Introduction

Family is the basic unit of society which performs various valuable functions for its members. Perhaps most important of all, it provides emotional and psychological security, particularly through the warmth,

love and companionship that living together generated between the family members. The family also provides a valuable social and political function by institutionalizing procreation and providing such other socially beneficial functions as rearing and socialization of children, along with humanitarian activities such as caring for its members when they are sick or disabled.

On the economic front, the family provides food, shelter, clothing and physical security for its members, many of whom may be too young or too old to provide for the basic necessities of life themselves. Ideally the place for the emotional development of the person, the family often becomes a scene of emotional release, when hatred and violence mingles with love and tenderness. Family members take advantage of this private world to work out on their nearest and frustration accumulated in other areas of their lives or in the personal background that binds them from within to other families. It is often in the family that people dare say anything that comes into their heads, or indulge in behaviour in the work place or in the public.

In patriarchal societies all over the world and in India in particular, an elderly male member of the family is considered to be the head of the household. A male symbolizes power and authority in household structures, while a woman by and large is treated as subordinated to the male in her various roles as wife, sister, daughter and even mother. The female is expected to look after the family. The male, as head of the family assumes responsibility for the social, physical and integrative needs of the household. The females, though relegated to a subordinated role and position in male-headed households nevertheless, participate quite actively in household duties relegated to them. Moreover, in the Indian society, the life of a woman is deeply embedded in the household and family.

Family and Its Transformation

In common English speech, its meaning can range over the members of a household (that is those who live together under the same roof), those who feel strong bonds of obligation to one another by virtue of close kinship (even if they do not live together), those who claim descent from a common ancestor (for instance ‘of good family’) and finally all

those with whom a person can trace a relationship, whether by blood or marriage (as in 'a family gathering'.) Each of these levels of meaning is of significance in understanding South Asian kinship, but confusion arises if they are not distinguished.

Sociologists have defined 'Family' as a group of individuals who live under the same roof, eat food cooked in one kitchen and are related to one another through blood or law. The basic ingredients of family are love, affection, affinity, a feeling of belonging and concern for each other. Right from its inception, the institution of family has undergone changes under the pressure of stresses and strains. Periodically, social scientists have expressed skepticism about the very continuance of the institution of family.

The importance of family in oriental cultures has been regarded almost as proverbial. Sociologists and Anthropologists never seem to tire in holding the family as a citadel of oriental cultures-strong, well-knit, resilient and enduring. Although the recent socio-economic and techno-economic events have brought about changes in the Indian family, they have not yet been documented by comprehensive field studies in depth. The focus of modernization, globalization, liberalization including those of industrialization and urbanization has made significant impact even on the Indian families. It is now referred to as the 'family in transition' (Kulkarni, 1985). Apparently, the suggestion is that the transition as from what is called the clan, the kinship group, the household, the joint family or extended family (depending upon which direction one is looking at it) on the one hand towards becoming what is known as nuclear family on the other. If one leaves out the larger tribal clans, the base of the Indian family could be delineated as follows: three or more generations and several biological family units of the same generations living together under one roof, eating out of a single kitchen and managing the household expenses out of a common pool of income, the decision-making authority being vested in the senior most members (mostly male) of the family. In the nuclear family they set up a separate home soon after marriage and raise their own guardianship. In the process, there is a separation of complete domestic establishments to be set up initially with contributions from parents on both sides but maintained later largely out of the income of the single male or male-female of the family. This was the first taste of freedom they came to experience in the context of the family.

The family can be categorized under the following heads: (1) Joint family; (2) Nuclear family; (3) Single parent family; (4) Women headed family.

In the joint family, all family members including brothers, sisters, cousins and remotely related persons lived under the care of head. All individuals get protection and security from the head, which controls lives, actions and emotions. The family provides social security to its members, sheltering widows, and to the infirm. The nuclear family is composed of husband, wife and their unmarried children. Single parent families are those families in which children either stay or are cared by mother or father. A woman headed household is one in which the woman is the head, i.e., she is the manager, provider and decision maker in the household (Vardhan, 1990). According to Ranjana (1989), "A female headed household is one in which the female is the major provider and /or protector, carrier, bearer and decision maker in the household.

Since independence, the position of women in the family has been changing and gradually a significant transformation comes about in the status of women. They are not only accepted as equal partners in family but are also assuming hardship in the household although the number of such cases is quite limited. Their position as head of the household certainly represents a change in their status. This change is a result of the processes of industrialization, urbanization where in (a) because of poverty and unemployment; men folk are compelled to move out of their ancestral homes leaving behind their families at their native places; and (b) the traditional joint family system is changing and emerging nuclear families in which in case of any absence of male due to death, desertion or divorce, the responsibility to run the household family is on women. This is giving rise to new situations in which women have to cater to the responsibilities of the household on their own while facing stiff opposition and odd situations from other quarters (Vardhan, 1995).

All these female headed households have enormous social, cultural and economic implications, because it is disturbing the social fabric of the society. At the social level again women's reform movements have given further impetus to such changes. A female headed household denotes a position in which woman is the head of the household. The concept of female headed household was originated rather recently. It was identified and defined for the first time during the 1970s when women researches noticed a large percentage of rural adult women living below the poverty

line and in poorer conditions than their male counterparts across the globe. They pointed out that the incidence of female-headed household was growing particularly in developed countries (Youseff & Hetler, 1983). Chatterjee (1988) pointed out that the incidence of female headed household was growing in India too. Since 1961, the Government of India has been enumerating female headed household in the Census. Till then this had remained unrecorded. The 1981 Census estimated about 10 percent of total households by sex in the total population for the first time.

Today, in India, where an increasing number of women across the board, have taken up a job of work by need or choice, the overriding issue remains to be that of time. With women joining the work force, there seems to be twice as much to get done within twenty four hours that were adequate when they stayed at home. With families being hit by a “speed-up” it is mostly the woman, for whatever reason, who has had to absorb this change of pace.

It would be simplistic to say that it is India’s social mores, even in its urban, westernized corners which are not conducive to women splitting their time between home and office. Several surveys conducted in the west also prove that even in the most liberated societies a woman’s work is never done. Besides the time factor, the issue uniting working mothers in the world over is the interminable guilt trip they are on. Guilty at work when she neglects to meet the demands on her time as a mother is guilty at home, as she does not spend enough time with children and family. The clinched business of spending ‘quality of time’ is a brave front, for how much quality time is really available, when there are a million household chores to catch up on?

Transformation in the urban families has also brought many changes. Technological and economic changes which have replaced established family values with confusion about the nature of parenting and the role of spouses. Enhanced earning power combined with a consumer culture has affected the lives of parents and children, altering their attitudes to family life which, in many ways lead to the weakening and even breaking of family bonds, which has added to the emergence of female headed families.

Review of Literature

With the far reaching economic changes of the present century, we find a sizeable section of women heading the households either out of compulsion or out of choice. Lewis (1993) argues that regarding the headship of the household, it is assumed that the headship is not shared often this is so. If it is shared; there would obviously be no question of headship.

Lone mothers in Britain are both an increasing proportion of the population and are increasingly characterized by poverty and dependence on state benefits. The major route of this situation is paid work. But despite this, the uptake of paid work by British lone mothers has been decreasing- while at the same time, uptake by partnered mothers is increasingly strongly. This is in some contrast to most other west European countries, where lone mothers show high rates of employment, at rates above those of partnered mothers, and hence suffer less from poverty and state dependency. However, there is also considerable variability in lone mother's uptake of paid work within Britain, at the levels of local labour markets and- within them- of neighborhood. This is varying social contexts in which lone mothers are situated and which structure opportunities and constraints for taking up paid work.

Edward and Duncan (1994), address variations in lone mothers' employment uptake rates at national, local labour market and neighborhood levels. They tried to explore the causes of these variations, looking in turn at state welfare regimes, national discourses about lone mothers, gender divisions of labour within local labour markets, support networks within neighborhoods, and one mothers' own negotiation of identity.

Lewis (1994), in his paper tries to define the problem of one parent families in twentieth century Britain. He explores the way in which public and private maintenance has been viewed dichotomously, and the treatment of lone mothers as 'mothers' and 'workers'. It concludes that there has been no linearity in the shifts in attitudes and policy towards lone mother families. Conservative opinions in the 1990s is a hostile towards unmarried mothers as was poor low opinion in the 19th century, and for not dissimilar reasons, but in between these women have been regarded (briefly) as doing their duty as citizens in World War I and as unfortunate victims in the immediate post-World War II years.

Sinclair (1994), in her paper discusses some of the factors involved in the apparent hospitality towards young single mothers in receipt of social security. It tried to find out what ideas and assumptions are built into the notion of 'the problem of lone parents' (as opposed to the problems faced by single parents). The position of lone parent families in British society has resurfaced as a major public issue in recent years as a result of concern about 'non-traditional' family formations and the associated public expenditure costs. This contrasts markedly with the situation in previous decades where there is evidence to suggest that the economic and social position of lone parent families in the Britain was improving.

Seleman (1994) in his paper examined patterns of teenage motherhood in England, Wales over the past forty years. He gave special attention to the social policy issues designed to meet the needs of young mothers, especially those without partners; policies which seek to influence the level and outcome of teenage pregnancy, such as sex-education, abortion, contraceptive provision and adoption; and policies which are assumed to influence decision.

Page (1994) in his paper explores some of the reasons why lone parents have become vulnerable to hostile attacks and considers the appropriateness or otherwise of some of the solutions currently on offer. It is argued that policies based on labour market participation have been too readily conversed and that paid care alternatives should be reconsidered. Attention was also be given to the thorny question of whether the role of public policy should be passive or more directive in its response to emerging family trends.

Government policy towards lone parents has always been inherently contradictory, attempting as it does to reconcile the responsibilities of parenting with the economic imperative of material independence, obligation which have traditionally been allocated within the nuclear family. Recent legislation which created the child support agency has continued this policy confusion, with measures to facilitate the re-entry of lone mothers into the labour market accompanied by a maintenance formula which will re-establish by a financial dependence upon a male partner. Sullivan (1994) in his research project is concerned with the experiences of lone parents themselves in attempting to reconcile these dual roles of parent and employee following contact with the Child Support Agency (CSA). It considered the extent to which the features of the legislation act as genuine incentives for lone parents to access new

employment opportunities rather than as imperatives to cooperative with a re-distribution of the supply of their financial support from the public to the private sector. It also considered separately from general family policy (where this exists), when many problematic issues relating to parenting and employment are common to both family types.

The Population Council Report on *Families in Focus: New Perspectives on Mother, Father and Children* has attributed the increase to the factors of high levels of marital dissolution, rising divorce rates and migration flows and child bearing by unmarried women. The pressure on the families from civil disruption and unstable employment are also leaving many children without adequate social and economic support from fathers, the report said (Bruce, Lloyd, & Leonard, 1995). More women world wide were carrying the greater of the economic responsibility for their children, thus becoming the sole or most substantial economic support to a large proportion of the world's family. The authors conclude, 'being a mother may be the most important factor disposing women to poverty unless women's family role are more fully valued and responsibility for children is more equitably balanced between both the partners, men and women.

Analyzing the available data from many countries on families with dependent children, the report found that diverse and shifting family relationship in contemporary life are challenging the myth of the national family as a "stable and cohesive unit in which the father serves as economic provider, mother as emotional caregiver and all children are treated equally and well" (Bruce et al., 1995). Problems faced by the parents in fulfilling their duties and the troubling conditions of childhood demand new global policies. New laws should support the families based on the true picture of the relationship between mother, father and children. The father's role overall has been neglected and the policy operated as if children have only a single parent-mother. Although, there was considerable evidence that the children benefit from the father being more involving in raising the child. Many children around the globe spend some portion of their childhood without the emotional, physical and financial support of a father. Economic support for children tends to decline, often abruptly after marital disruption. Fathers generally felt even less obligated to pay support to the child when they were never married to the child's mothers.

Children are often separated from one or both the parents when mothers and fathers migrate in search of income or when their parents'

marriage dissolves. Families suffering from the strains of these multiple measures fail to find support in public policies. The governments are not making sufficient investment in the “next generation” or in adults, who wish to be good parents. In many countries working mothers are seen as neglecting their children and men who wish to participate as the fathers in child care roles are not encouraged by economic and social measures.

Ahmad (1994), a noted sociologist says that economic independence had led to a certain weakening of family bonds and dependencies. In the recent years to come, growing individualism will be accompanied by higher rate of divorce. Women have become assertive both in the family and in the same professional sphere as man.

A study by Vardhan (1995) on *Female Headed Households: A Sociological Investigations* finds that women in India are assuming responsible roles in the households. In addition to their traditional household roles, they are also, playing the role of bread-winner under compulsion of circumstances. They represent a change in the status of woman. Like other women and men they need to have a level of economic and social competence sufficient to assure that they can cope with changing circumstances. The women-headed households are both a traditional and permanent base of a growing number of women and they deserve at least the same kind of recognition and support as other types of households as they have the same functions to perform. There is no doubt that the women who have to act as heads of households are doing their best to cope with their situation.

Ranjana (1989) in her study of Jaunpur town has established a clear linkage between female-family headship and poverty. She finds that out-migration is the major reason for female headship followed by widowhood. The incidence of female-headedness was more among the scheduled castes. These women had to work in the traditional household service sector at odd hours and they receive low remuneration and often in terms of left over food. Their children actively support them in the battle for survival, only few could attend the school. Irrespective of economic status, for female heads, the work starts in early dawn hours and lasts till late in the evening. She found that women-headed households in rural India and the division of labour on gender line has a distinct disadvantage for females in the rural areas, as it restricts their employment opportunities in agriculture to season of sowing and

transplantation only. Rural female headed households which depend largely on labour power suffer most, as employment opportunities in non-agricultural areas are almost negligible.

Menon (1997) in her study on *Male Migration and Indian Rural Women* took the sample of rural families in Delhi who hailed from the villages of Eastern Uttar Pradesh. The study probes the effects of male migration on the family structures, on the authority patterns, or the decision-making process on the adjustment of females within the family and the larger community, how women cope with day-to-day problems and above all with their increased work-load. The primary reason for males coming to the city is to obtain employment. Large percentages of migrants are dissatisfied with their jobs. Lack of job security, low wages, and poor working conditions cause frustration. At the same time, the inability to send money, because of the above factors, further aggravates the situation. The village family, on the other hand, believes that the migrant member is having fun in the city and is neglecting the family which he has left behind. The females in the village families suffer prolonged separation and live in constant anxiety about dangers to their men in the city, and when financial support does not come as compensation they feel miserable when a man cannot remit money at home, or does not visit the village. This further increases the unhappiness of the wife.

In another study by Menon (1997) *Tradition and Female Identity: A Study of Women and Home in Bangladesh*, the focus is on the sample of four villages near Dhaka in Bangladesh. The finding suggests that the absence of the male-head of the family from the household for some length of time is a new development in the existing patriarchal family traditions. The withdrawal of the male head of the family from the family home evidently reduces his ability and authority to control and decide, and the wife is likely to step in to fill the gap.

Menon (1997) in her study of *Female Headed Households and Family* probes about the various dimensions of female headed households. The study probes “Is migration of the male instrumental in the Upward social Mobility?” Is migration the only alternative to cope with the problems emerging from rapid social change? The findings of the study suggests that male migration is viewed as unavailable, and the women are reconciled to it, especially as it means regular employment of the man and a cash of income for the family. In half of the families, the females,

in most cases the wife of the migrant, shoulder the major responsibility of taking care of the children. They manage the several minor and some major crisis in the family, sometimes single-handedly. In the absence of males, women have control over what they earn in kind, but it is doubtful that they gain any substantial power in the family. More often it is the male who decides the expenditure on different items.

Emerging Female Headed Families and Its Interface

For a number of years now we have witnessed a crisis of social dimension that is causing disturbances in the family. Constantly rising rate of separation and divorce, difficulties of all kinds in the placement of children and grandparents, economic insecurity and genuine poverty are creating disturbances in the family. For a great many families, including most one parent families, family violence produces hundreds of thousands of victims among wives and children. Revelation of phenomenon such as incest, which was thought to be much less common or was concealed, prostitution of minors, acute problems of communication, particularly with regard to sexuality, closing in of community horizons as a result of urbanization, invasion of private world of the family by television are spreading at very fast speed. More and more widespread feelings of insecurity and powerlessness among parents and young people, extremely painful questioning and difficulty in assuming traditional roles, governing relations between man and woman, between parent and child, disappearance of obligatory aspects in the families are coming in the fore front. But it is by no means an irreversible process of transformation, therefore, we need to study issues and the interface in the emerging female headed households. Family still represents a primary need and important value for the people. The family system is currently exposed to considerable stresses and strains. It is also a link between change and continuity or to put it differently it serves like ballast for social stability in the midst of the winds of change. In the changing circumstances, the changed form or nature and function of families will be analyzed.

The growing realization that women across the globe, especially of the Third World countries are oppressed and that they need special strategies of planning and development for upliftment prompted the United Nations

to declare the Seventies as the Decade of Women. The rapid economic and social changes that swept through the last few decades had altered the family system. Incidences of migration have increased many folds. Transportation system has changed the lives of many people. Increasing availability of transportation, easy accessibility to towns, metal roads, etc. have made migration less troublesome. Use of high technology in the tele-communication has also led to the emergence of women headed families. There is a continuous decline in land holding size which results in unemployment. The uneducated youth who do not get employment in their native places have to migrate for the employment, and in most of the cases they do not take the risk to take their family in the initial years. In the situation of migration and lack of resources for earning, the people leave their family behind or they leave the place of residence and go to settle at the place of employment. This phenomenon brings change in the family function which is left behind at the place of residence.

What is interesting is that in the situation of migration, the patriarchal family in a short time period becomes a matrilocal family. Largely the elder persons in the family leave the village to work outside, the eldest women in the family works as the head of the family. She has in her person all the powers which normally rests with the male head i.e. husband. The woman-head decides the day-to-day matters and sometimes crucial matters. This is a new role which is being assumed by the women at the countryside. Admittedly, the urban working woman has her share of hard life. Surely she can communicate the matter which requires prompt attention.

The empowerment of women is a new phenomenon which requires an exploration. The major thrust of the proposed inquiry is to make an intensive and indepth study of the female headed household at the city level. What is important is to see how women perform this new responsibility. The study of family will analyze the nature and extent of transformation among women headed households. It will be able to penetrate that to what extent the functions, role, authority and status of women undergo change in the new phenomenon of absentee head of the family. It is a matter of worth for investigation.

Data and Methodology

With the above objectives in mind, an exploratory study was designed to generate data from the selected respondents. The data were collected from Rohtak city in Haryana state. In Haryana we selected Rohtak city as the research site simply because the families of migrants belonged to that place and from within that place Rohtak city is the nearest city from their native village where there are ample facilities for higher education. Rohtak also has the advantage of its proximity to New Delhi, the capital of India, which helps in the inflow of information and other activities. The study was conducted in the three colonies of Rohtak city, i.e., Sector-1, Sector 14 and dev colony. The purpose of selecting these colonies was simply that most of the women headed families are living in these families. The data were collected between May 2007 to June 2007. The instrument used for data collection was a scheduled structured interview seeking information concerning the socio-economic background of female headed families, decision to migrate, daily life in a migrant household, intra and inter-household relationship, changes in gender roles and power relations within the household, management and investment of remittances, and impact of migration on the wives participation in the labour market. An interview of about 35 respondents was conducted to get an in-depth insight into the life-style of female headed families. Some questions regarding socio-economic background, for examples were closed, meaning that there were fixed categories of answers. Other questions were open ended and yielded more of qualitative information. All the interviews were tape-recorded.

Findings

In our study all the respondents who were interviewed in Rohtak city had put out migration as the major reason for female headship as their husbands had either gone for army service, air force, navy or services in other sectors. Caste-wise, the incidence of female-headedness was more among the jats (85.70 percent) and the rest were from yadav caste. All the women were in the 25 to 45 age range. Most of the women i.e., 14 (40.00 percent) were in the middle age-group of 36-40 years. It means they already had an experience of living alone without their husbands for a long period. Sixteen (45.71 percent) had their birth place

in neighbouring villages whereas 19 (54.29 percent) had their birth place in urban areas. The total literacy rate in Haryana is 68.59 per cent but among females it is only 56.31 per cent which is below the national average (Census of India, 2001). Our data shows that the women were not only literate but nearly half of them 17 (48.58 percent) had post-graduation and 9 (25.72 per cent) were professionally qualified. We also found that the majority of the respondents i.e., 29 (86.00 percent) belonged to a nuclear family as against 6 (17.14 percent) who were living with their in-laws or parents and other family members. There were 24 (68.58 percent) families who were having 2-3 members in the family whereas 9 (25.71) families had members ranging from 4-5. The income of female headed household ranges from Rs.10,000 to 40,000 per month. Table-1 reveals that just 6 (17.14 percent) had income level of Rs.10,000 to 20,000 15 (42.86 percent) had family income ranging between Rs.20,100 to 30,000, while 14 (40.00 percent) had monthly income in between Rs.30,100-40,000. There were only 5 (17.14 percent) women who were home maker while the rest were working in different fields. Maximum number of women 13 (37.15 percent) were engaged in teaching at school level or at college level. They found teaching as best among all occupations which gives them enough time to take care of their home and children. Others were engaged in some work like doing stitching of clothes, tutoring at home and clerical related work.

Table1. Socio-Economic Profile of the Women who are Heading the Family

Occupation	Monthly Income	Number of Family Members	Family	Education	Birth Place	Age-Group (in years)
Housewife 5 (14.28)	Rs.10,000 -20,000 6 (17.14)	2-3 24 (68.58)	Nuclear 29 (82.86)	Higher Secondary 4 (11.42)	Rural 16 (45.71)	25-30 6 (17.14)
Stitching & tutoring at home 9 (25.72)	Rs.20,100 -30,000 15 (42.86)	4-5 9 (25.71)	Joint 6 (17.14)	Graduation 5 (14.28)	Urban 19 (54.29)	31-35 11 (31.44)
Teaching in school/college 13 (37.15)	Rs.30,100 -40,000 14 (40.00)	More than 52 (5.71)		Post-graduation 17 (48.58)		36-40 14 (40.00)
Clerical & related work 8 (22.85)				Professional qualification 9 (25.72)		41-45 4 (11.42)
35 (100.00)	35 (100.00)	35 (100.00)	35 (100.00)	35 (100.00)	35 (100.00)	Total 35(100.00)

The large scale migration of labour from rural and tribal areas to towns and cities has been characterized by the predominance of unskilled and semi-skilled male workers accompanied by their families. Migration of male is due to the cost of moving the family. To take the family would defeat the purpose of migration which is often adopted as a short-term strategy to generate more cash and improve a household's standard of living.

As a result, many families have been transformed temporarily into de facto female headed households. This has resulted into its implications on women and children. Migration often leads to the nuclearization of family and greater decision-making powers for the wife, usually at the mother-in-law's expense. Other questions such as whether wives acquire greater power vis-a-vis their husbands or within the wider community, and more importantly, whether the changes would be permanent in nature, have remained much more controversial.

Decision to Migrate

The reason for migration, the process of decision-making and the extent to which it was a unilateral decision, since wife joined the husband later on after marriage was a decision before the marriage. Therefore, an assessment of these processes can provide important insights into the impact of migration. Economic reward was the only motivation for migration. Men felt that immediately after marriage it is a hardship. A husband's willingness to migrate to the services for air-force, navy and army was the best proof of this devotion to his family, and many wives were quick to recount as evidence the difficulties that their husbands or other migrants had to undergo.

While the decision on migration was made by the husband, the practical and emotional support of wife and family members has a considerable influence on him. The wives of many migrants were eager for their husbands to work outside and played an active role in making the arrangement prior to departure.

Migration hastens the process of nuclearization of a household which then usually allows the wife more autonomy. However, migration does not mean nuclearization of family because in Haryanvi society, culturally it is not acceptable for young women to live on their own. Thus, young

wives with no children often live with their in-laws. But all the wives argued that it is unpleasant to live with them because it took away from them the autonomy that marriage has afforded them. However, as soon as a woman starts having children, and they become of school going age, she shifts along with her children in her own residence. In our sample, five women stayed with their in-laws despite their unwillingness, one moved to her parent's house and 29 live in their own independent households.

Daily Life in a Migrant Household

When the husband moves, the households are transformed into female-headed households. In addition to their usual tasks, the wives had to shoulder much of their husband's responsibilities. Skillful management of financial affairs with cash resources is essential for the households. Many of the wives had to learn to budget for daily expenses, educational costs and unexpected expenses. They had to improve their managerial and shopping skills, extend their old networks and weave new ones in order to gain access to information and support that would assist them in protecting their households' interests. While their managerial responsibilities increased, most wives argued that their domestic chores had decreased owing to their husbands' absence. The exceptions were those five wives who had to stay with their in-laws, they complained that their workload increased because being a daughter-in-law, she had to serve everybody in the household and attend to the guests. They eagerly looked forward to the day they could move back to their own homes.

Intra-household Relationships

Migration almost always involves leaving the children behind. Before migration the father is always in vicinity and takes part in disciplining and bringing their children. Majority of the women claimed that their husband's pressure lent them moral support in raising their children and that any wife should be able to demand such support. According to most migrants' wives, it was this loss of moral support which was the greatest sacrifice they had made in trying to secure a better life for themselves

and their children. However, some of our informants pointed out that their husband's absence had little effect on their children's upbringing since the role of father, beyond an economic one, was minimum.

We did not find any evidence that children in migrant households were given more work and responsibilities than children in other households. However, girls in migrants' households differed from other girls. The migrants' families girls are being given more decision-making powers over daily routine, in being closer to their others, and perhaps in being rewarded more often with little presents.

None of the children from the migrant's families expressed hostility towards their fathers' absence. Children often expressed hostility towards their fathers' absence. Children often explained with much enthusiasm that their fathers had migrated in order to provide them a better life. Children often praised their fathers publicly for enduring hardship and separation in order to give them a better a future.

Inter-household Relationships

The help and support that neighbours, kins, and community provide one another, both on a daily basis and at times of crisis, is significant. Much of the interaction between women takes place in the absence of their husbands. Migrants' wives had freer schedules for socializing and their homes provided a more suitable centre for women to assemble to perform collective activities such as sewing, banking, tutoring, or simply watching television. Most wives viewed their acquired freedom as compensation for their loneliness.

Similarly, the interaction of wives with their own kin intensified when they lived in closed proximity. They often developed clear ties and exchanged services much more readily with their mothers or sisters and sometimes their brothers. This stood in sharp contrast to domination or relations with the husbands' kin. Often there was almost a deliberate tendency for migrants' wives to publicize their differences with husbands' kin, to air complaints of lack of support. Many of the migrants' wives adopted strategies that alienated the husbands' families. This is because customarily the immediate members of a husbands' family of origin can raise a claim to his earnings, particularly if they are poorer than he. In return, they are expected to provide help and assistance as needed.

Failing to fulfill their responsibilities would remove the legitimate grounds for a claim. Both the returned migrants and those temporarily visiting their families tended to side with their wives and blame their kin.

These developments are not restricted to the migrants' households, but migration closely hastens the process and provides the wives with an opportunity to play an active role in restructuring social interactions of the family to their own advantage.

Management and Investment of Remittances

The role wives played in deciding how to allocate remittance varied greatly. Contrary to common sense expectations, the less educated wives played a more significant role in the management and investment of remittances than the more educated wives. The latter had little knowledge of the amount of remittances and did not expect to have much say in their disposal. Depending on the level of remittances, the wives often tried to invest in durable goods as assets for their households. Those with more resources purchased a piece of land or plot for house also. Wives were often actively involved in gathering information on the availability and pieces of land, and in discussing the terms of land transactions. The wives also made extravagant consumption. First, it meant a higher standard of living for the family. Second, they drew prestige and power by sharing the use of these items with neighbours and other members in their social network.

Impact of Migration on the Wives' Participation in the Labour Market

Except of the old, infirm or the very rich, all women work. Most of the work women do, however, goes unrecorded and unnoticed. This is because in developing countries women are engaged in subsistence activities, the products of which are not for profit, sale or exchange in the market and, therefore, are not considered economically productive. The activities are food processing, dairying, poultry rearing and the husking of grains and they are not counted as work by census definition. The collection of fuel, fodder and water, cooking, washing and cleaning;

child bearing and child rearing are excluded from the category of economically productive work. Thus, women's work remains largely invisible. In our study since women are heading the families and able to work to take their own decisions for their employment or work to earn money, they choose their work voluntarily. In our sample 9 (25.72 percent) who were driven to the necessity of eking out a living and had some knowledge about the employment market had either taken up decent jobs or even sitting at home were engaged in tutoring or stitching clothes and earning good amounts of money. Thirteen (37.16 percent) women were engaged in school or college teaching and they reported that school/college teaching is best for women headed families as they had to be in schools or colleges for not more than six hours and the remaining time can be spent with children and other outdoor activities. Eight (22.85 percent) women were engaged in some clerical related work, which has long duty hours but working place is within vicinity, therefore commutation time is saved. All the women were happy with their outside work. They said that this serves a dual purpose of supplementing family income and also to provide creative outlets for the expanding aspiration of women. Since the husband has gone out and she is not staying with in-laws, therefore she also has the work autonomy and economic autonomy.

Changes in Gender Roles and Power Relations within the Household

Distribution of power household is also influenced by factors external to the household. For instance, it is affected by the gender roles and the modes of power distribution within the marriage considered legitimate by the wider society. The power and status that husbands and wives enjoy in the wider society influences their relationship within the household. Since the balance of power within the household is partly constrained by the factors beyond the control of husband and wife, this area is complex field for social investigation. Nonetheless, it has been demonstrated in many societies that there tends to be positive correlation between those more concrete aspects of power such as access to household resources and the contributions, both material and non-material, made by individuals to their household.

Most women in the Indian context are socialized to see themselves as inherently domesticated and to underestimate their ability to perform tasks beyond the boundaries defined as domestic. They are encouraged to see motherhood, within marriage, as their most valuable and relevant social role and their source of power, security and status. Consequently, from early childhood they learned to be 'good' and to acquire the reputation of being a 'good' marriage partner. They are educated to avoid violating norms of gender roles as well as to be honorable, compromising and be supportive of the male head of the household.

Since a woman's chastity had a crucial influence on the honor of her own family and her husband's, she was, as a general rule, prevented from going beyond her neighborhood unaccompanied. Men often praise publicly the young women who knew or often pretended to know, nothing of the world outside the four walls of their homes, and who acted themselves in performing any task beyond the traditional female domain. Other women expressed fear or unease at the idea of having to leave their familiar environment to enter an alien and unfamiliar world and its institutions.

Now the picture is changing because of the rapid pace of social change. In recent times, education and employment have taken some women to the wider world, opening up alternatives to the more conventional female rules. However, the conventional mentality has been increasingly in conflict with the reality of daily life. More and more public and formal domains have impinged on the private. Families need to interact not only with kin and friends but also state institutions that are geographically distant. Thus, many women are forced to acquire the ability to deal with hospitals, government offices, schools, courts etc. The absence of husbands for months and years at a time created a new situation. Not only did wives have to take on many new duties, they also have to accept responsibility for the decisions and directions of their households. They also have to deal with the banks and post-offices. Despite some confusion during the initial period of adjustment, most respondents are amazed to discover that they are more capable than they had imagined. Their self-perception change, and this changed influenced their relationships with their husbands, children and the broader community.

Conclusion

Though marital dissolution like death of spouse, divorce, separation or desertion are the most common reasons which become responsible for the emergence of female head of the households, there is growing evidence that other such changes in the traditional occupational base, agricultural practices, landholding patterns and patron-client relationships along with population growth contribute to the growing number of women-headed households. However, we have taken a sample of those female headed families who have migrated for their services in army, navy and air force and also for other better services for bringing more remittances to their families and raise the standard of living. Therefore, in our study women got confidence and tend to get more decision-making powers and of course not passing through the economic crisis. They are able to manage the inflow of income and quite successfully manage their resources. They even took big decisions like purchase of land etc. which were beyond the imagination for women. It provided them a sense of economic autonomy. Male migration is viewed as a prosperity in their family with little uncomfot to some inter and intra household relationship. Migration has resulted in the nuclearization of a household vis-à-vis autonomy to women after having their own children. Women have become equal partners in handling the financial matters and manage to operate. The women are successfully operating in the network relationship for gaining access to information and support. In terms of raising the children in the family they lack the physical support which is the greatest disadvantage of remaining single headed. However, there is no difference in the raising of children among families who have father and mother together and in the families where father is away. Absence of husband has given alternatives to women to take help and support from the neighbors and kin. The loneliness is compensated by frequently interacting with their fellow neighbors and kin. Thus, the issues and challenges which come before women headed families when the husband migrates were aptly managed by women in the conventional society like India where the female is not regarded as the head of the family.

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